

Message Text

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ACTION OES-07

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-12 ISO-00 ACDA-12 CIAE-00 INR-07

IO-13 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 EB-08 NRC-05 SOE-01

DODE-00 DOE-12 SS-15 SP-02 PM-05 H-01 PA-01

PRS-01 USIA-06 /127 W

-----003360 231452Z /44

P R 231430Z DEC 77

FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0022

INFO AMEMBASSY VIENNA

C O N F I D E N T I A L PRETORIA 7069

USIAEA

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MNUC, ENRG, SF

SUBJECT: SOUTH AFRICA'S COMMERCIAL ENRICHMENT PLANT

SUMMARY: IT IS BEING RUMORED THAT SOUTH AFRICA WILL TRY TO FINISH ITS ENRICHMENT PLANT WITHIN THREE YEARS. WE ARE SKEPTICAL OF THE ABILITY OF SOUTH AFRICA TO DO THIS EVEN IF A DECISION HAS NOW BEEN MADE ON THE SCALE OF THE PLANT. END SUMMARY.

2. WASHINGTON POST CORRESPONDENT HERE HAS HEARD RUMOR THAT SAG WILL TRY TO SPEED UP CONSTRUCTION OF ITS COMMERCIAL ENRICHMENT PLANT, WITH WORK TO START IN EARLY 1978 AND COMPLETION WITHIN THREE YEARS. IF THIS WERE TRUE, IT WOULD OF COURSE REDUCE DEPENDENCE ON FUEL FROM U.S. FOR KEOBERG POWER PLANT WHOSE REACTORS ARE SCHEDULED TO BE IN OPERATION IN 1982 AND 1983. SOME SUPPORT IS GIVEN TO THIS RUMOR BY REPORT IN FINANCIAL MAIL OF DECEMBER 22 HINTING THAT MURRAY AND ROBERTS, BUILDERS OF PILOT ENRICHMENT PLANT AT VALINDABA, HAVE SECURED CONTRACT FOR THE COMMERCIAL PLANT AND THAT EARTH MOVING FOR PROJECT COULD COMMENCE AS EARLY AS NEXT FEBRUARY.

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3. POST CORRESPONDENT CONTACTED DR. ROUX OF ATOMIC ENERGY BOARD WHO WOULD NOT CONFIRM THAT SCHEDULE FOR ENRICHMENT PLANT HAD SPEEDED UP BUT DID ACKNOWLEDGE THAT SOME FACILITIES NOT RELATED TO ULTIMATE DECISION ON SIZE OF PLANT COULD BE STARTED IN EARLY 1978.

4. COMMENT: IN PUBLIC STATEMENTS, SAG OFFICIALS HAVE SAID DECISION ON SIZE OF ENRICHMENT PLANT WOULD NOT BE TAKEN UNTIL LATE 1978 AND THAT IT WOULD BE OPERATIONAL IN MID-1980'S. QUESTION OF ITS SIZE IS RELATED TO DIFFICULT MARKET PROJECTIONS AND DESIRE FOR AGREEMENTS WITH FOREIGN FUEL CUSTOMERS. AS OF LAST MAY, SOUTH AFRICANS ADMITTED THEY HAD NOT COME TO TERMS WITH ANY OTHER PARTIES AND WE HAVE HEARD REPORTS OF GROWING DOUBT OVERSEAS OF SA'S RELIABILITY AS A FUEL SUPPLIER. RECENTLY, DR. ROUX TOLD AN EMBASSY OFFICER THAT THE PLANT MAY NOT BE ABLE TO TAKE FULL ADVANTAGE OF ECONOMIES OF SCALE AND THUS COMPETE ON WORLD MARKET BECAUSE SA WAS BEING SHUT OUT OF NUCLEAR EQUIPMENT IMPORTS IT NEEDS.

5. WHILE IT IS POSSIBLE SA HAS NOW TAKEN A DECISION ON SIZE OF THE PLANT, WE ARE SKEPTICAL OF THE REPORT THAT MUARRAY AND ROBERTS HAS BEEN DIRECTED TO AIM FOR COMPLETION IN THREE YEARS. PROJECT IS A HIGHLY COMPLEX UNDERTAKING FOR PRESENT STAGE OF SOPHISTICATION OF SA INDUSTRY, ESPECIALLY IF FOR STRATEGIC REASONS EFFORT IS MADE TO MINIMIZE DEPENDENCE ON EQUIPMENT FROM OVERSEASAS.BOWDLER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 23-Dec-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
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Format: TEL
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Handling Restrictions: n/a
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Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
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Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
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Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
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Review Date: 01-Dec-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
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Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 138834
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SOUTH AFRICA'S COMMERCIAL ENRICHMENT PLANT SUMMARY: IT IS BEING RUMORED THAT SOUTH AFRICA WILL TRY TO FINISH ITS ENRICHMENT PLANT WITHIN THREE YEARS.
TAGS: MNUC, ENRG, SF
To: STATE
Type: TE
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